



September 22, 2005

## Operation Royal Flush defendant gets life sentence for drug trafficking

A federal judge has sentenced **Joel Francisco**, of Providence, to life imprisonment for trafficking in cocaine and crack cocaine. Francisco was one of thirteen defendants charged with federal drug trafficking offenses in **Operation Royal Flush**, a multi-agency task force investigation into drug dealing by members and associates of the Almighty Latin King Nation.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentence, which U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi imposed on September 19 in U.S. District Court.

In April, a jury found Francisco, 32, guilty of possessing with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine. Because Francisco, who is also known as “Joey Crack,” had two prior felony drug convictions, the crack cocaine count made the life sentence mandatory under federal drug sentencing law. There is no parole from a federal life sentence.

During the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary E. Rogers and Stephen G. Dambruch presented evidence that, on October 24, 2004, **Providence Police** detectives and **Drug Enforcement Administration** agents seized nearly a kilogram of cocaine from an apartment that Francisco rented at 64 Dexter Street, Providence. Agents seized ten plastic bags containing about 890 grams of powder cocaine and about 100 grams of crack cocaine.

-more-

The jury also heard recorded telephone conversations in which Francisco discussed drug deals in coded language.

Eight other defendants seized in Operation Royal Flush have pleaded guilty to federal charges and have been sentenced to prison:

*(addresses are in Providence unless otherwise indicated)*

- **Elliot Rivera Cruz**, 752 Atwells Avenue, DOB 10/4/71 – sentenced to 13 years for conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Anthony Goris**, 86 Florence Street, 3/08/78 – sentenced to two years for conspiracy to distribute marijuana, possessing with intent to distribute cocaine, and possessing a firearm in connection with a drug-trafficking offense;
- **David Batista**, 48 McClellan Street, 11/23/76 – sentenced to two years for conspiracy to distribute marijuana and being a felon in possession of a firearm;
- **Xiomara Mercedes**, 35 Cross Street, Lawrence, MA, 2/5/74 – sentenced to one year for conspiracy to distribute marijuana;
- **William Cifredo**, 72 Aurault Street, 6/17/74 – sentenced to five years for conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine, and possessing with intent to distribute cocaine;
- **Reynaldo Rodriguez**, 75 Village Road, Woonsocket, 1/06/78 – sentenced to seven years for conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Miguel Jusino**, 47 Wesleyan Avenue, 7/06/84 – sentenced to seven years for conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Joel Trinidad**, 93 Lexington Avenue, 5/17/82 – sentenced to five years for conspiracy to distribute and possessing with intent to distribute crack cocaine;

\*\*\*

*-more-*

Three defendants have pleaded guilty to drug-trafficking charges and are detained, awaiting sentencing:

- **Freddie Rodriguez**, 78 Vernon Street, 10/11/75 pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute cocaine;
- **Pedro Hernandez-Rodriguez**, address unknown, 7/12/79, pleaded guilty conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Juan Guerrero**, 65 March Street, 7/24/80, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine.

\*\*\*

**Joel Francisco Torres**, also known as Ponch, whose address and date of birth are unknown, is charged with using a communication device in committing a drug offense. He is detained at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls.

**Providence Police** and the **Drug Enforcement Administration** led the **Operation Royal Flush Task Force**, in coordination with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office. Six other federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies contributed resources: the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives**, the **Federal Bureau of Investigation**, the **Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement**, the **U.S. Marshals Service**, **Rhode Island State Police**, and **East Providence Police**.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rogers and Dambruch are prosecuting the federal cases that resulted from the investigation.